

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 085803

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DRAFTED BY: S/ S- O: JMCGUNNIGLE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USCINCEUR

CHUSMTM PRIORITY

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 085803

EXDIS

FOL SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC MAY 6, 1973 FROM JIDDA
REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

S E C R E T JIDDA 1846

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS

SECDEF (PRIORITY)

USCINCEUR, VAIHINGEN, GERMANY (PRIORITY)

CHUSMTM DHAHRAN (PRIORITY)

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI REQUEST FOR F-4 - DISCUSSION WITH SULTAN

REF: A) DHAHRAN 304; B) JIDDA 1791

SUMMARY: MODA PRINCE SULTAN ASKED AMBASSADOR MAY 5
FOR PROMPT USG AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO SAUDI PURCHASE
OF F-4'S. (IF AGREEMENT FORTHCOMING, SULTAN HAS PLANS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 085803

TO ELIMINATE LIGHTINGS AS RSAF SHIFTS TO F-4' S.)
SULTAN NOTED FRENCH HAVE BEEN URGING SAUDI PURCHASE OF
MIRAGES AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY RENEW SALES PRESSURES
DURING KING'S VISIT TO FRANCE, BEGINNING MAY 14. BELIEVE
THERE ARE NOW FURTHER GROUNDS FOR USG TO AGREE IN
PRINCIPLE TO F-4 SALE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MEETING MAY 5 PRINCE SULTAN TOLD AMBASSADOR AND CHUSMTM GENERAL SMITH HE VERY HOPEFUL USG WOULD BE ABLE GIVE EARLY FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO SAUDI REQUEST FOR F-4' S. SULTAN DESCRIBED HOW A VISITING FRENCH GENERAL HAD SPENT TWO HOURS WITH HIM SEVERAL DAYS AGO URGING HE CONSIDER PURCHASE OF MIRAGES. SULTAN SAID HE FULLY EXPECTED THAT DURING KING FAISAL'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO FRANCE (BEGINNING MAY 14) FRENCH GOVT WOULD RENEW ITS PRESSURE TO CONVINCE SAUDIS THAT THEY SHOULD ACQUIRE FRENCH PLANES. IT WOULD BE MOST DESIRABLE FOR HIMSELF AND KING ENTER THESE DISCUSSIONS WITH KNOWLEDGE THAT US PREPARED MAKE F-4' S AVAILABLE. SULTAN CONSIDERS F-4 MOST DESIRABLE WEAPON FOR INCLUSION IN SAUDI AIR FORCE BOTH SYMBOLICALLY AND IN PRACTICAL MILITARY TERMS.
2. DESCRIBING DIFFICULTIES HE HAS HAD IN WORKING OUT A SATISFACTORY CONTRACT WITH THE BRITISH FOR CONTINUED OPERATION OF LIGHTING AIRCRAFT, SULTAN SAID HE HAD FINALLY PINNED UK REPS DOWN ON TERMS WHICH WOULD (A) ALLOW SAUDIS TO CANCEL WHOLE AFFAIR WITH PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR , BRITISH AIRCRAFT COMPANY, ON EIGHTY DAYS NOTICE, (B) GAVE HIM CERTAIN GUARANTEES BY UK GOVT THAT SAUDIS THOUGHT NECESSARY AND (C) WOULD PHASE OUT AIRWORKS, THE PRESENT CONTRACTOR, WITHIN ABOUT NINTEY DAYS. (CONTRACT IS NOW APPROVED BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR SIGNING). 80- DAY TERMINATION NOTICE INCLUDED SPECIFICALLY TO PERMIT SAG TO SHIFT TO F-4' S AND ELIMINATE LIGHTINGS WHENEVER MOMENT SEEMED APPROPRIATE. HOWEVER, SULTAN REALIZED THAT TIME REQUIRED FOR DELIVERY, ELUCIDATION OF CONTRACT DETAILS, ETC., WOULD MAKE IT IMPRACTICAL TO CONSIDER PHASE - IN OF F-4' S IN ANYTHING UNDER TWO YEARS.
3. AMB REPLIED THAT UNLIKE SOME OTHER GOVT'S US NOT SEEKING SIMPLY TO SELL AIRCRAFT. RATHER OUR OBJECTIVE

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 085803

WAS TO ASSESS CAREFULLY SAUDI ARABIA'S LONG RANGE AIR DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS AND PROVIDE SUGGESTIONS THAT WOULD BEST MEET ITS NEEDS. SUCH APPRAISAL WOULD NECESSARILY REQUIRE SOME TIME AND THOROUGH STUDY. SULTAN SAID HE REALIZED SOME DELAY WOULD BE INVOLVED IN PUTTING TOGETHER DETAILED OFFERS BUT MAIN THING WAS TO GET AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE AT ONCE FOR SAUDI PURCHASE OF F-4. HE WOULD LIKE

TO SEE IT INTRODUCED EVENTUALLY ON SAME KIND OF CONTRACT
AS NOW PREVAILED IN PEACE HAWK (F-4, GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT)
PROGRAM. AMB SAID WE WOULD DO OUR BEST.

4. COMMENT: SULTAN' S DESIRE TO SET STAGE FOR REPLACEMENT OF LIGHT-
INGS WITH F-4 REFLECTS CLEAR MILITARY (AS WELL AS POLITICAL AND
PRESTIGE) OBJECTIVES IN PRESSING FOR EARLY US DECISION.
BELIEVE SULTAN' S OWN INTEREST IN ACQUIRING FRENCH
AIRCRAFT IS MINIMAL. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT
FAISAL AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOVT AND THAT HIS PERSUASIVENESS
WITH LATTER WILL BE STRENGTHENED IF HE CAN CITE USG AS
REGULAR DEPENDABLE SUPPLIER PREPARED ONCE MORE RESPOND
PROMPTLY AND POSITIVELY TO SAUDI REQUESTS.

5. IT WOULD, OF COURSE, BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE AND HAVE
EXTREMELY FAVORABLE IMPACT ON PRESENT STATE OF OUR RELATIONS
IF WE COULD GIVE SULTAN THE DECISION IN PRINCIPLE HE SEEKS
BEFORE HE DEPARTS FOR PARIS WITH KING FAISAL MAY 13. WE
BELIEVE FRENCH WOULD THEN DEFINITELY BE OUT OF RUNNING
AND THAT KING WOULD BE FULLY CONVINCED AS TO US DETERMINATION
ASSIST SAUDI ARABIA MEET ALL ITS DEFENSE NEEDS.

6. GIVEN THIS NEW TACK OF SULTAN, WE BELIEVE THERE IS
EVEN MORE GROUNDS THAN STATED IN REFTEL FOR US TO BE
UNEQUIVOCAL IN A COMMITMENT (TO MAKE F-4 AVAILABLE TO
SAUDI ARABIA) AND CORRESPONDINGLY SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDER A-
TION OF ALTERNATIVE AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE AS SPECIFIC AND
WELL REASONED AS MAY BE POSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE. THACHER
UNQUOTE ROGERS

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